

Blueberries & Raspberries



Aahhh, just saying the words makes my mouth water! Of course, pickin' and eatin' is the absolute best way to enjoy these delectable berries, but you can make jellies and jams, pies, juice, or just add some to your favorite scoop of ice cream for a summertime treat! But enough about eating them, I'd like to tell you about how to grow these fruiting shrubs in your own back yard.

First, let's talk about Blueberries. They are very adaptable and the soil conditions vary depending on your planting desires. If you are planting them more for ornamental use (they have clusters of little white bell shaped flowers and awesome fall color!), they can grow well in a range of soil conditions, including dry soil. But if you are growing them specifically for berry production, they require rich, organic soil that is moist but not consistently wet. For best results, Blueberries require highly acidic soil. The best way to make sure your soil is perfect for Blueberry growing is to add organic matter and granular sulfur. They can be planted in areas of full sun as well as light shade and need weekly waterings since they have a shallow root system.



There are quite a few different varieties of Blueberries to choose from. We grow Highbush Blueberries here on the nursery. When it comes to berry production, you don't have to plant two different varieties for cross pollination. But I would highly recommend it simply because if you do you'll get not only bigger berries, but more of them! Woo-hoo!

If you can provide the soil conditions needed for these Blueberries, then the rest is easy! Their shrubby growth habit doesn't require a lot of space (there are even dwarf Blueberry selections out there!), they don't require a lot of pruning. Heck they don't even have any major insect or disease problems... By next summer you'll be racing outside with "bed head" just to put some on your bowl of cereal!

Now Raspberries on the other hand, aren't as picky when it comes to soil conditions (but they are prickly—so watch those thorns). Again, for best results they require rich, organic soil that is moist but not constantly wet. You may add organic matter to the soil, but Raspberries don't require the same highly acidic soil as Blueberries. Early spring is the best time to plant (Raspberries grow well in the cool spring months) and

the best place to plant is in full sun. Unlike the shallow root system of the Blueberries, Raspberries are deep rooted. So they require good, deep waterings. The best way to do this without standing there with the hose is to either use drip irrigation, soaker hoses or my so-called "trickle method" (turn on the hose so water is just trickling out, place that end of hose at base of plant and allow water to run for about 30-45 minutes—do this once a week, depending on weather). And always remember to mulch! Mulch helps keep the soil moist and it keeps down weeds.

A little lesson about Raspberries... the canes, or branches are biennial. That means that the canes grow for one year and then produce flowers and fruit the second year. After the cane produces fruit the second year, it dies and can then be pruned off the shrub. Don't worry, new canes are produced to replace the ones that die!

There are two different types of Raspberries: June-bearing and Everbearing. June-bearing plants produce one heavy crop of berries from June to early July. While Everbearing plants produce two crops, one in June and one in fall. Which type you plant is completely up to you. All Raspberries need to be pruned, and these two types require different pruning methods. The June-bearing type should be pruned every spring. After a cane bears its fruit, it dies. These dead canes should be removed every year. To determine which canes should be removed, wait until spring arrives and you see green growth on the plant. The dead canes are the ones that are brittle and gray. Everbearing types can be pruned in different ways depending on what you would like them to produce for you. If you want them to produce one heavy fall crop of berries, but no summer crop, all the canes can be cut down to 2-4" each spring. Now, this is the easy method, but remember—you won't get any berries in summer! The second way to prune Everbearing plants is to use the same method as the June-bearing plants. After you remove the dead canes, prune all the live canes back to about 5' tall.

Just remember to protect them from your feathered friends too! We're not the only ones who love to eat these delicious berries!



- Heather Neuin
Pennsylvania Pride Grow Team